

efforts to integrate these programs have been made in California. And while not as fully integrated as we would like, it has been our long-standing and often stated position that administrative separation of HIV prevention efforts from other STD control efforts is artificial and, we hope, temporary.

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Life-style and Illness

TO THE EDITOR: I would like to respond to your editorial in the January 1990 issue entitled, "Health Care—Where Are the Problems and Where Are the Solutions?"¹ The problem is people. In your editorial, you state "The problems are actually the problems of illness rather than of health, and the first and most important steps in health care have to be taken where the sick, injured, or emotionally disturbed person is, with the resources for care that are available. This is what health care is all about. Yet there are many who view it differently. They see it more as a national problem that, therefore, requires a national solution by which they mean a nationalized system for rendering patient care. This view is reinforced by the rising cost of health care which is now nationwide, and has become a problem not only for the person afflicted, their families, and the immediate community, but for business and industry and even for government at the local, state, and national levels." You note also, "there

is a notable tendency to push responsibility for paying the cost downward. It could be that the present day problems of health care can be better solved from the bottom up. . . Americans are pretty good at solving their problems when they recognize a need."

There are some of us who view the health care problem differently. We do indeed see it as a national problem that requires a national solution. That national solution is not a national health care payment plan, however. What I see is the need for a national program on governmental, both federal, state, county, and private sector, programs in educating people to make appropriate life-style and dietary choices and reduce most of the illnesses that now afflict us.

Currently, we are spending around 97% to 98% of our health care dollars in diagnosing and treating established disease. We are spending a pittance in trying to educate people to avoid those diseases.

What if the California Medical Association and the American Medical Association would take the lead in spending some time and money to produce public education spots for radio, television, and the print media promoting good health and counteracting much of the pernicious advertising that is destructive to our health? I think we could do a great deal to improve the image of medicine by taking a positive prohealth stand in the media.

The solutions to most of our health care problems are amazingly simple. The problem is getting people to make appropriate choices in their life-style and dietary practices. To accomplish this, we must educate our patients. As organized medicine, let us take a pro-health stance and not just wait to pick up the pieces when the machine falls apart.

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